

SITUATION REPORT NO. 1
INCIDENT NO. 2000-026
DATE: April 6, 2000 TIME: 4:30 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Extremely high winds – An unusually strong pressure gradient associated with a low pressure system moved along the North Dakota-Canadian border on April 5, causing injuries and property damages throughout the state.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: In the city of Bismarck, one person suffered broken wrists after falling, and nine people were transported by ambulance to area hospitals. None of the injuries were life threatening.
3. DAMAGES: Gusty winds that pushed into North Dakota on April 5 uprooted trees, tipped over tractor-trailers, damaged buildings, fueled fires, downed utility lines and traffic lights, caused flying debris and resulted in pressure differentials that knocked out windows of buildings and vehicles. The National Weather Service (NWS) reported that the system entered the state at approximately 7 a.m. at Williston and spread across the state throughout the day, bringing wind gusts that ranged from 60 to 70 miles per hour (mph). Gusts peaked at 71 mph in both Bismarck and Dickinson. The system had moved out of state by late evening.

The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) received its first report of damages from McKenzie County, where wind gusts were clocked at 69 mph. Winds blew the roof off a manufactured home, and intermittent power outages occurred in Watford City.

Strong winds in Stark County ripped the canopy of a Dickinson business, and blew shingles off roofs. Damages also occurred to vehicle windows, and trees were blown down.

The Hettinger County Emergency Manager reported that wind gusts of up to 71 mph were recorded during the April 5 storm. The city of Mott experienced a one-hour power outage. Firefighters responded to a grass fire near New England. In the city of Mott, homeowners reported shingle and siding damage.

In Morton County, the Mandan Fire Department responded to fires caused by downed power lines and damaged transformers. Power outages occurred

throughout the city of Mandan, stranding one individual in an elevator. Gusty winds downed trees and damaged shingles, siding and windows.

Extensive damages were reported in Burleigh County, where wind gusts fueled fires, downed traffic lights and signs, caused flying debris and uprooted trees throughout the Bismarck area. These high winds also downed power lines, tipped over a petroleum truck and caused damages to buildings. In the city of Bismarck, firefighters responded to 138 calls that included 20 fires and fire alarm activations. Fires were reported at an apartment complex and a business where an electrical fire was ignited when winds blew an air conditioner off the building. One prairie fire burned 36 square miles of land. A portion of a hospital skywalk fell, and some of its windows were knocked out. Winds also blew the roof off a grocery warehouse, and pushed garbage dumpsters and cans into vehicles. The Bismarck Municipal Airport, concerned about safe landings, diverted flights temporarily.

At the State Capitol, staff for the N.D. Division of Facility Management reported that half of the glass panels were damaged in the atrium of the Judicial Wing. In the Legislative Wing, a glass panel next to a door was blown out. The carport on the south side of the Capitol was closed after winds loosened copper ceiling panels. Near the State Library, winds knocked down two trees; one landed on a new vehicle.

Troopers for the North Dakota Highway Patrol responded to three rollovers, including one south of Wilton where gusty winds knocked over a tractor-trailer, which temporarily blocked both northbound lanes of traffic on U.S. Highway 83. Winds also tipped over another semi on U.S. Highway 281, 10 miles north of Edgeley, and caused a rollover of a pickup that was pulling a large trailer south of Fargo on I-29. No one was injured in the accidents. Troopers also responded to several calls in reference to debris-clogged roads, including traffic signs that were blown over and a stock tank that landed against a roadway fence. Troopers were asked to route traffic around prairie fires. Several light poles at the Apple Creek rest area on I-94, west of Bismarck, were knocked down.

High winds compounded problems for emergency access roads in Kidder County that were threatened by high water. Roads that had either washed out or had shoulder damage resulting from winds of the past few weeks were completely damaged by the gusty winds of April 5. All communities reported that winds knocked down large branches, blew shingles off roofs, and caused flying debris. The Tuttle elevator lost tin, and farmers reported the loss of calf shelters and small buildings. Power outages lasted as short as five minutes and as long as three hours.

In Emmons County, a trailer house was destroyed when winds blew it onto its roof. Winds also tore the roofs off several lakeside cabins and trailers. A prairie fire was reported south of Westfield, and a trailer owned by local emergency

management was tipped over by gusty winds. A 60,000-bushel steel bin in Kintryre was damaged.

Damages similar to the ones experienced in Bismarck were reported in Dickey County to include roof damages, downed power lines, and blown-out windows. Firefighters battled two blazes, including one where a storage building south of Oakes was destroyed after winds blew the roof off of the building, starting an electrical fire. In Ellendale, firefighters were called out to a fire that had been smoldering but was reignited by winds. The Ellendale Fire Department lost a portion of its roof, which fell and damaged nearby vehicles owned by firefighters who were responding to the fire. A building in Ellendale lost a brick wall.

In Stutsman County, the city of Jamestown experienced temporary power outages, and cable television wires were downed throughout the city. Damages included a business sign that was knocked over, and traffic lights that had been turned and twisted on traffic light poles.

Logan County officials reported that a 60,000-bushel grain bin in Napoleon was pushed off its foundation, and the sides were damaged. Several large trees had been uprooted.

In McIntosh County, firefighters responded to a prairie grass fire four miles south of Ashley along N.D. Highway 3.

In Barnes County, the windstorm caused isolated power outages, knocked tree limbs down, knocked out windows and blew shingles off buildings. Winds blew a small storage shed onto a street in Valley City.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Fire departments, law enforcement officials, communications center, public works crews, city and county elected representatives, electric cooperatives and emergency management officials responded to problems created by the extremely high winds.

STATE: The Governor's Office, State Radio Communications, the Division of Facility Management and North Dakota Emergency Management monitored conditions.

FEDERAL: The NWS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also monitored conditions.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: Neighbors are assisting each other with ongoing cleanup efforts.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: The city of Bismarck Board of Commissioners issued a disaster declaration on April 5 because of damages caused by high winds. The

Bismarck/Burleigh County EOC was activated in response to wind-related problems.

During the windstorm, law enforcement diverted traffic from areas where damages had occurred.

Debris removal efforts are taking place throughout the state, as highway crews cleanup debris, and electrical companies and cooperatives are repairing or replacing damaged poles. Tree removal crews and residents have been working to clear downed trees.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: With the exception of continuing technical support, no additional assistance has been requested.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No outside assistance has been reported at this time.
9. OTHER: Situation Reports published by North Dakota Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director